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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

To achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and give effect to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, the implementation and follow-up processes must be pursued coherently through a comprehensive framework. Building on past resolutions of the General Assembly and agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council, Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003 provides a framework for bringing architectural coherence to the various implementation processes while maintaining the distinct identity of the follow-up processes in relation to each of the outcomes. The present report provides an update on the implementation of resolution 57/270 B, focusing on those of its provisions that pertain to the Assembly, and makes recommendations for further action to promote an integrated and coordinated approach and to strengthen ongoing activities for the implementation of the outcomes of conferences and summits.

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I. Introduction

1. United Nations conferences held since the 1990s have demonstrated the interlinked nature of development. The outcomes of these conferences show that progress in one sector is not attainable without addressing issues in others. The conferences have also reaffirmed that no single government, no single institution, no single entity can achieve this alone. Hence, the integration and coordination of implementation and follow-up of conference outcomes have been a recurring theme in the pursuit of development goals.

2. To realize the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, the implementation and follow-up processes must be carried out in a complementary, coherent and coordinated manner across sectors at all levels.

3. The cross-sectoral issues emerging from the major United Nations conferences were crystallized into the Millennium Declaration, which gave expression to a set of quantifiable targets for development goals. Identifying complementarities and linkages among the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration, including internationally agreed development goals, and the commitments and goals of United Nations conferences should help to mobilize resources and maximize support from various constituencies and follow-up mechanisms in a mutually reinforcing way.

4. Past resolutions of the General Assembly[1] and agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council[2] have sought to build a framework for addressing the cross-sectoral issues which are common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences. General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003 provides a framework for bringing architectural coherence to the various implementation processes while maintaining the distinct identity of the follow-up processes in relation to each of the outcomes.

5. With the adoption of Assembly resolution 58/291 of 6 May 2004 regarding the convening, in 2005, of a high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly, the issue of integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences has to be closely linked with the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Such linkages will be the subject of the comprehensive report to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the high-level plenary meeting, as requested in paragraph 2 of the resolution.

6. The present report provides updated information on the implementation of Assembly resolution 57/270 B, focusing on those provisions of the resolution that pertain to the Assembly. It should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on the same subject (E/2004/71), submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2004.

II. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B

7. General Assembly resolution 57/270 B provides guidance for various actors to work in a complementary way in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. The framework set by the resolution is

meant to facilitate an integrated and coordinated approach at the national, regional and international levels. It addresses the role of Member States, of the United Nations system, of other relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, and of intergovernmental bodies in reviewing the implementation of the outcomes.

8. The follow-up required is mostly aimed at strengthening ongoing activities for the implementation of the outcomes of conferences and summits. In the sections below, the report describes the progress made by the intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations system in promoting an integrated and coordinated approach, including the work of the Assembly and its Second and Third Committees. The report also refers to the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be held in 2005, without addressing specific details. A separate report of the Secretary-General on this meeting, as mandated in paragraph 3 of Assembly resolution 58/291, will be submitted in due course to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

A. Promoting an integrated and coordinated approach by reviewing cross-sectoral thematic issues

9. The General Assembly, by resolution 57/270 B, requested the Economic and Social Council to establish, no later than 2004, a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of its substantive session, based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. The Council initiated consultations on the multi-year work programme in February 2004. While the Council agreed on a cross-cutting theme focused on the Millennium Development Goals for the first year, (i.e., 2005), and although some progress was made towards identifying themes for the multi-year programme, the consultations could not be finalized during the substantive session of 2004. The Council decided to continue consultations with a view to finalizing the programme before its substantive session of 2005.

10. Establishing a multi-year work programme would enable the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to prepare better their contributions. The cross-sectoral thematic approach could help the Council to bring about greater coherence and effectiveness in the exercise of its managerial and coordination responsibilities. For example, to assist the Council in providing focused guidance to the functional commissions, the existing consolidated report on the work of the functional commissions could concentrate on their work pertaining to the cross-sectoral thematic issue to be discussed that year. This would facilitate the task of the Council of promoting horizontal integration of the work of the functional commissions around the cross-sectoral theme, and would also serve to strengthen substantive links between its coordination segment and its general segments, where the reports of the functional commissions are considered.

11. **The General Assembly may, therefore, wish to emphasize that the Council should finalize the multi-year programme as soon as possible but no later than June 2005.**

12. As requested by the Assembly in resolution 57/270 B, consultations were held between the presidents and the bureaux of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to improve coordination between the Assembly and the Council in the consideration of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-

up to conference outcomes. Greater predictability in the work programme of the Council, including through the early adoption of decisions on themes and finalization of multi-year work programmes, could help to bring a sharper focus to these consultations and greater impact on the process of integrated implementation of the conference outcomes.

B. Assessment and strengthening of ongoing activities for the implementation of the outcomes of conferences and summits

13. The Economic and Social Council, as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination, has continued its efforts to strengthen its role in promoting integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up. The Council, by resolution 2004/44 of 22 July 2004, on the role of the Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, decided to continue to take the necessary steps for the effective implementation of the provisions of Assembly resolutions 50/227 of 24 May 1996, 52/12 B of 19 December 1997 and 57/270 B. It also decided to contribute to the overall preparation of the high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly in 2005 and requested the functional commissions, the regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to contribute to the preparation of the Council's input.

14. As requested by the Assembly in resolution 57/270 B, each functional commission continues to examine its methods of work in order to better implement the conference outcomes. The functional commissions are required to report to the Council no later than 2005 on the outcome of this review. Details of the progress made in that regard have been provided in the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions (E/2004/81) and in two conference room papers.

15. In its resolution 57/270 B, the Assembly invited the regional commissions, in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations and processes, as appropriate, to contribute, within their mandates, to the review of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and to provide inputs to the discussions of the Council on the cross-sectoral thematic issues to be addressed in the coordination segment of its substantive session. The regional commissions have been strengthening their role in linking global deliberations with regional implementation measures, while continuing to support subregional and regional integration and consensus-building. The regional commissions, at the invitation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, organized regional implementation meetings prior to the twelfth session of the Commission and regional forums during the session in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

16. There are proposals that the links of the regional commissions with the Economic and Social Council be further strengthened, in particular by giving greater visibility to their work. There is a growing recognition that ways and means need to be explored for enhancing the impact and visibility of the participation of the regional commissions at the substantive sessions of the Council.

17. Moreover, there is also a need to ensure that the potential of regional processes to contribute to the integrated follow-up to conferences is fully exploited.

The regional commissions could enhance their roles as promoters of intersectoral and multi-stakeholder dialogues at the regional level. They could also look at selected cross-cutting issues that are common to the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits and, especially, call for greater regional coordination and attention.

18. Further action is needed to strengthen the linkage between the policy guidance of the Council and the operational activities of the United Nations system, in particular in the coordinated implementation of conference outcomes. In this regard, the governing bodies can play an important role in ensuring that relevant policy decisions are integrated into the programme of work of the funds and programmes. By resolution 2004/63 of 23 July 2004, the Council requested the functional commissions to clearly identify in their reports the operational implications of their work for consideration and appropriate action by the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes.

19. **While welcoming this important step, the Assembly may consider requesting the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system as a whole to enhance the linkages between policy development and the operational activities of the United Nations system, including through greater interaction among the governing bodies.**

20. By resolution 57/270 B, the Assembly underlined that the inter-agency guidelines for operational activities for development of the United Nations system and the relevant work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the United Nations Development Group should reflect the agreements and commitments reached at the major United Nations conferences and summits. To this end, the Assembly stressed the need to further promote system-wide inter-agency coordination and cooperation, utilizing the Chief Executives Board.

21. The commitment of the United Nations system towards the realization of the goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration has remained the guiding framework for the work of the Chief Executives Board and its subsidiary structures. The overriding aim, within that framework, is to harness the system's contribution towards poverty eradication and to ensure that the wide range of the system's activities and interventions to promote growth, productive employment and social development are mutually reinforcing.

22. Work is under way, under the aegis of the High-Level Committee on Programmes of the Chief Executives Board, to shape a system-wide contribution to the first comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, to be undertaken by the General Assembly in 2005. The intention is to highlight how the United Nations system is coming together to support the efforts of Member States in respect of the different, interlinked areas covered by the Declaration. In shaping this contribution, full advantage is being taken of the extensive inter-agency work under way in connection with the various components of the system's core strategy for the Millennium Development Goals outlined in previous reports of the Board.

23. It should also be noted that inter-agency cooperation extends well beyond the specific issues that feature each year on the agenda of the Board and its main subsidiary bodies. Within the United Nations, for example, most of the

documentation before the Economic and Social Council, its functional commissions and related bodies is now mostly a joint product of the work of the system. It is in these forums that achievements and results of inter-agency work in many different areas of inter-agency engagement are assessed on an ongoing basis.

24. The Council has not only welcomed the work of the Board in harnessing the activities of the system in support of the integrated follow-up to conferences and the Millennium Declaration but has also expressed the intention of strengthening its dialogue with members of the Board on all relevant aspects of the work of the system and its effective coordination, in particular in the context of the Council's coordination segment. This is expected to pave the way for stronger linkages between various parts of the system and the Council.

25. Through the triennial policy review of operational activities for development, to be undertaken at its current session, the General Assembly will assess the overall functioning of the United Nations system at the country level and examine how the system has aligned country operations with the Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals and the development agendas emerging from major United Nations conferences and summits.

26. The Assembly will have an opportunity to consider how to enhance the ability of the United Nations system to provide support to countries in translating internationally agreed development objectives into nationally owned programmes. **In this context, the Assembly may wish to underscore the need to promote greater consistency among the strategic development frameworks by the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions, national poverty reduction strategies and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.**

27. As emphasized by the Assembly in resolution 57/270 B, the United Nations agencies continue to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of their operations through results-based management and improved operational guidelines. Although significant progress has been made, especially since the reform processes launched in 1997, further efforts are needed in the areas of simplification and harmonization of procedures. **The Assembly may wish to give further impetus to these efforts in the context of its triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.**

28. The need for a substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development, on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, as reiterated by the Assembly in resolution 57/270 B, is also an important part of the triennial policy review. The gap between funding and the resources required by the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies to support developing countries must be addressed in order for the United Nations system to contribute effectively to the realization of development goals.

C. Work of the General Assembly and its Second and Third Committees

29. In its resolution 57/270 B, the General Assembly noted that consideration by the Second Committee and Third Committee and by the Assembly in plenary meeting of relevant agenda items should be coherent with the process of integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

30. By the same resolution, the Assembly recommended that, at the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly, its Second Committee consider the indicative programme of work set out in the annex to resolution 57/270 B and take a decision thereon by December 2003. In accordance with the resolution, the General Committee should ensure better coordination of the agendas of the Second and Third Committees, and the bureaux of the two Committees should review their respective programmes of work in order to exchange information on the issues discussed in each, identify potential areas of overlap or duplication and examine means of considering, in a more coordinated manner, issues related to the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits and make recommendations thereon to their respective Committees. Further, consideration should be given to the use of joint informal debate that can inform the work of each Committee, and better use could be made of the General Assembly plenary debate for issues that are considered by both Committees.

31. In order to comply with the above-mentioned recommendation, preparations were made to hold a meeting of the two bureaux at the start of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The bureaux examined the various aspects of the work of the two Committees, in accordance with resolution 50/270 B, and reported the results of the consultations to their respective Committees. Likewise, the bureaux of the two Committees at the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly are expected to meet jointly at an early stage of the session. The two Committees also organized a joint informal panel discussion on globalization.

32. The General Assembly continues to explore ways and means for improving the work of its Second and Third Committees. The Assembly, in resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004, decided that each Main Committee should give specific attention to the rationalization of their future agendas by biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items, and make recommendations to the plenary Assembly for its decision by 1 April 2005.[3] The Assembly also gave guidance regarding the consideration of certain agenda items in the Second and Third Committees, which takes effect beginning with the fifty-ninth session,[4] and decided that the item entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council" should be considered in its entirety in the Plenary.[5]

33. Further, the Assembly decided that the practice of interactive debates and panel discussions should be utilized or expanded, as appropriate, by all Main Committees,[6] and that the practice of "question time" should be introduced, as appropriate, in all Main Committees to enable a dynamic and candid exchange with heads of departments and offices, representatives of the Secretary-General and special rapporteurs.[7]

34. With reference to the indicative programme of work for the Second Committee,[8] it should be recalled that, by decision 58/553 of 23 December 2003, the

Assembly approved the provisional programme of work of the Second Committee for 2004 and agreed to revert to the issue at its fifty-ninth session. The Bureau of the Second Committee held consultations with Member States on the organization of the Committee's work, in view of the Assembly's invitation to the Bureau to make suggestions for a decision at the fifty-ninth session of the Committee. The Bureau has made its proposals available to the Member States for their consideration and appropriate decision. **The Assembly should strive for a more streamlined and coherent organization of the work of the Second Committee and its programme of work for future sessions in order to enhance focus, visibility and participation.**

35. By resolution 57/270 B, the General Assembly also provided guidance for further improving the reports for the Assembly and making them more analytical and action-oriented and, in that regard, referred to the processes launched by its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002. That resolution notably contained provisions for consolidating reports. In the context of the relevant provisions of Assembly resolution 57/300, the Secretary-General has already consolidated a number of reports and will continue to do so.

D. High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly in 2005

36. Pursuant to paragraph 39 of its resolution 57/270 B, the General Assembly is to assess annually the implementation of the outcomes of the conferences and summits, the achievement of the goals and targets set by them and provide the necessary guidance for the further implementation of and follow-up to these outcomes. In accordance with Assembly resolution 58/291, the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly in 2005 will be the occasion to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of all of the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences and summits.

37. Bearing in mind paragraph 3 of Assembly resolution 58/291, the President of the Assembly appointed facilitators to hear the views of Member States on the modalities, format and organization of the high-level plenary meeting. Based on the views expressed at the open-ended consultations held on 28 May, 11 June and 18 June 2004 and in various dialogues between the facilitators and all major groups of countries and individual delegations, the President has circulated a paper which outlines the views of Member States on the timing, duration, scope and nature of the event, the structure and format of the high-level meeting, the exact modalities and the extent of participation by the stakeholders.

38. There was convergence among Member States on a number of issues. In particular, they seemed to agree that the focus of the 2005 event should be on the implementation of prior commitments rather than a comprehensive document of a declaratory nature. It was also encouraging to see that there appeared to be common ground with regard to issues on which there was still divergence.

39. As requested by the Assembly in resolution 58/291, the Secretary-General will submit to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on suggested modalities, format and organization of the major event for consideration and a final decision, taking into account the views expressed by Member States at the open-ended consultations.

40. The Economic and Social Council has decided to contribute to the overall preparation for the 2005 high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly, with input from the functional commissions, the regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies. The Council will devote its high-level segment in 2005 to the theme "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities". The theme of its coordination segment in 2005 will be "Towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration".

41. Furthermore, during the period leading up to the high-level meeting, there are many processes that can feed into it by focusing on the cross-sectoral issues within their respective mandates. These processes include, for example, the high-level meeting of the Assembly on HIV/AIDS in June 2005, the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2005, and the reviews by the Commission on the Status of Women of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Commission on Social Development of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. Also, the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States will be held in January 2005. **The General Assembly may wish to request the intergovernmental bodies and the organizations of the United Nations system to gear their deliberations and work plans towards making significant contributions to the preparations for the high-level meeting of the Assembly in 2005.**

III. Conclusions

42. The internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, provide a comprehensive basis for action at the national, regional and international levels with the key objectives of poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach in the implementation of policies and actions to advance poverty eradication and sustainable development is more crucial than ever. An integrated approach should facilitate the forming of coherent, cross-sectoral alliances around common themes and goals for joint action at the national and international levels.

43. Important changes are taking place in the way of doing business to enable the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences. The guidance given to various entities by the General Assembly is serving to reinforce the move under way in those institutions in the direction of more coordination and cooperation to ensure mutual reinforcement in the follow-up to and implementation of conference outcomes.

44. To realize the vision of a world in 2015 as set out in the Millennium Declaration, it is important to bring together the follow-up processes through a comprehensive framework. The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly in 2005 should provide an occasion not only to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of the commitments contained in the

Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences and summits but also to reinvigorate the political will to achieve these goals in a timely manner.

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolutions 45/264 of 13 May 1991, 48/162 of 20 December 1993 and 50/227 of 24 May 1996.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/50/3/Rev.1), chap. III, sect. A, agreed conclusions 1995/1; ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/55/3/Rev.1), chap. V, agreed conclusions 2000/2; and A/57/3 (Part II), chap. V, sect. A, agreed conclusions 2002/1.

[3] Assembly resolution 58/316, annex, para. 3 (a).

[4] Ibid., paras. 4 (f) to (i).

[5] Ibid., para. 4 (c).

[6] Ibid., para. 3 (c).

[7] Ibid., para. 3 (d).

[8] Assembly resolution 57/270 B, annex.